

SURVEY

In order to assist the planning team in learning about the views of stakeholders and interested parties, The Polling Institute of Monmouth University prepared and conducted an online survey in August of 2009. Led by Patrick Murray, Director of the Polling Institute and a member of the Board of Directors of the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, the survey provided the team with “snapshot” information from 103 representatives of organizations that are potential partners within the heritage area. Respondents included 65 visitor sites and 38 other historic organizations.

Some of the survey’s questions were designed to supplement a resource inventory for the management plan. Other questions were designed to capture an overall view of challenges and opportunities for the heritage area. The small number of responses (we estimate about 1-in-6 of potential respondents we contacted) means that our numbers may be less meaningful than the overall sense we have gained of shared priorities and concerns.

Following are key findings reported in a summary provided by Patrick Murray and his staff at The Polling Institute for the Crossroads Association’s Board of Directors.

Working with Heritage Area Themes and Morristown National Historical Park

The National Park Service has identified three themes for the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. They are:

- **A Revolutionary Landscape** – New Jersey’s eighteenth-century physical and economic geography—its terrain, natural and built environment, and natural resources—influenced how the war was carried out.
- **Rendezvous for Rebellion** – Important battles and military campaigns in New Jersey, as well as the leaders and soldiers who fought them, influenced the outcome of the American Revolution.
- **Divided Loyalties** – New Jersey citizens’ conflicting political loyalties, differing religious views and cultural diversity caused a “civil war” throughout the state/colony that affected families, communities, churches and social institutions.

About two-thirds (66%) of respondents report that their site or organization emphasizes at least one of these themes either “a lot” or “some,” including one-third (34%) who emphasize all three themes. On the other hand, 1-in-4 (25%) respondents report they do not emphasize any of these themes. About 1-in-4 (27%) respondents see their site as relating thematically to Morristown National Historical Park (a key point identified in the Crossroads National Heritage Area legislation), while 38% say it does not and 34% are not sure or give no answer. Six-in-ten (59%) respondents say they have a great deal of interest in working with other Revolutionary War related visitor sites and organizations in New Jersey. Another 29% have some interest. Only 12% have little to no interest in working with other organizations.

Possible Heritage Area Activities

Survey respondents were also asked to rate the potential value of possible activities to be undertaken by the heritage area in three categories: Education & Interpretation, Resource

Preservation, and Marketing & Community. Following is a list of the “top tier” activities that at least half of respondents consider to be “critical.”

- **Education & Interpretation:** Increasing New Jersey residents’ awareness of NJ’s Revolutionary War heritage; promoting New Jersey’s revolutionary war heritage in the school curriculum; and increasing out-of-state visitors’ awareness of NJ’s Revolutionary War heritage.
- **Resource Preservation:** Promoting preservation of historic buildings; supporting current planning and preservation efforts; and promoting preservation of cultural landscapes.
- **Marketing & Community:** Promoting New Jersey residents’ pride and identity; and more directional signage (wayfinding, etc.).

Visitor Site Operations

About one-third (35%) of visitor sites report that they have an interpretive plan. A significant number (34%) are unsure if they do.

Nearly half (45%) of these sites report that the bulk of their visitors (i.e. three-quarters or more) are local residents living within 10 miles of their site. Most sites – about 3-in-4 – say they target school groups, other groups of interest and independent travelers, but few – about 1-in-5 – specifically target bus groups in their marketing strategy. However, half say they would like to see more bus groups visit their site.

Nearly all these sites (i.e. between 8-in-10 and 9-in-10) report that they have car parking and restrooms on site as well as food, lodging, and shopping within a short distance of their site. About half also report they have a gift shop on site, parking for buses, and close proximity to public transit. Nearly all sites offer guided tours, non-English audio materials, and festivals or other special events. Many also offer both permanent and temporary exhibits. About half feature hands-on children’s programs, first-person interpretation, and reenactments. Also, about half have books and monographs about the site as well as brochures for self-guided tours. About 1-in-3 have walking trails, A/V presentations, interior signage for tours, and programs for special interest groups (e.g. teachers, seniors, etc.).

Organizations’ Needs

Visitor sites reported that their greatest challenges are developing fundraising strategies and undertaking marketing and advertising. They asked most often for assistance in developing their capabilities in (1) marketing and public awareness; (2) fundraising; (3) assessing needs of structures; and (4) new interpretive programs linking with other visitor sites and/or organizations.

Sites that do not entertain visitors also reported concerns and needs in fundraising, marketing and public awareness. Their greatest challenges also included strategic planning, and they also asked most often for help in staff training, collections management and conservation, and assistance to ensure that the story they are telling is consistent, factual, and engaging.